

# ARCHITECTURE

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*F. J. Sterner, Architect.*

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JOHN MERVEN CARRÈRE

March 1st, 1911

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F. P. KEPPEL, Secretary,  
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## ARCHITECTURAL CRITICISM

THIS issue of ARCHITECTURE presents the first series of photographs of The New York Public Library, Carrere & Hastings, architects (Plates XXII-XXXI), which have been published since the fittings, chandeliers and most of the decorations have been placed, and how much these often slighted portions of the building add to its general appearance can be judged readily from the illustrations herewith.

While the consensus of opinion of the architectural profession seems to be that the exterior of the Public Library is in mass not completely satisfactory, possibly due to the fact that the main façade has had introduced in it too many features to make it a homogeneous whole. The profession is practically unanimous in very great admiration of the beauty and purity of the details, the exquisite proportion of the orders employed, and the charm of the interiors. Considering first the exterior it seems as if almost too much had been made of the entrance. Every one is agreed that the entrance to a building should be very strongly marked, but in the case of the library this entrance has been thrown forward so far and the sides treated in such a solid manner as to somewhat destroy the unity of the façade. However, the great triple entrance, with the beautiful treatment of the sides, is both impressive and dignified; the fountains at each side of this entrance are an interesting feature and the great vases are most wonderfully designed, although perhaps out of scale. Indeed, it is on questions of detail throughout the building that one's attention is centered, and I fail to recall any building where every trivial item was so carefully thought out and so exquisitely designed as here. The photograph showing the detail of the end bay on the main façade, and the Forty-second Street side in sharp perspective assists one to appreciate this fact. The pavement treatment in parti-colored squares flanked by rows of small trees, the balustrade and pedestals supporting the lower from the upper level, are most beautifully designed, and of the corner bay itself it seems impossible to sufficiently praise it. Carrere & Hastings have never spared either time or money to approach perfection as nearly as possible and the result in this case can be appreciated. The columns seem as if the drums could not be better disposed, while the architrave above (which is perhaps as much enriched as in any large buildings) still has no trace of either weakness or affectation. The Forty-second and Fortieth Street sides which, unfortunately, are not very well shown in these photographs, are each very delightful pieces of design, perhaps even better, although not so striking nor so rich as the main façade. One notable feature of the exterior, and to some extent of the interior, is the beauty of the carving. The lions heads shown in the end bay, though purely architectural, still resemble a lion, and a real live lion, much more than some architectural lions we have known. The three heads in the key blocks on the entrance are admirable in scale and beautifully cut, and it may be interesting to know that these heads after they were set up at the building were not considered by Messrs. Carrere & Hastings quite good enough and Tonetti was employed to recut them, which he did with most remarkable success, especially when one considers the difficulty of recutting supposedly finished work. The rear of the building, which faces on Bryant Park, is in mass very satisfactory, but the treatment of the stacks with the tremendous windows of the reading room above, as has been



already said in this column in discussing another library building, does not seem entirely perfect. The wonderful base which supports the entire building was here necessarily interrupted by the tall thin slits of windows which light the stacks and the base has been square cut and not returned. This is probably inevitable and it is possible that the slight reveal of these stack room windows was also insisted upon by the officials of the library, yet, when one compares this reveal with the exceedingly deep reveal of the large windows above, one is aware of a certain feeling of instability about the structure: that the top is heavier than the portion which carries it. One feature of the rear, of which no qualification of praise is needed is the Bryant Memorial, certainly one of the most beautiful structures of its kind in the world. I believe that the firm which has left a monument like this behind them could rest their reputation on it alone, for this little building with all its graceful and airy proportions is dignified and powerful, magnificent in design and wonderful in detail. The treatment of the interior of the semidome is beautiful in the extreme; the pilasters above the corners, enriched in the Italian way, are perhaps as good as the best that Italy can offer, and the design, without being tricky or smart, is superbly original and in many small ways treated with a precision that makes one feel that it has added to rather than discarded precedent.

The interiors are beyond criticism, superbly rich as befits the most important monumental building in America's most important city, yet at the same time of a refined elegance which makes one think primarily of their beauty and only secondarily of their cost. The corridor in front of the entrance is done entirely in the same marble of which the exterior is composed, but the detail has been brought down in scale so as to form a sort of transitional stage between the exterior and interior work. The stair hall has a most delightful elliptical ceiling with penetrations; the periodical room, with the piers plain and simple, without any cap or treatment to take the place of a cap, supports a wooden ceiling which almost puts the Blois ceilings in the second rank. The periodical reading room is of more usual type, wonderfully well done. The exhibition room, mainly of marble, has again a wonderful wooden ceiling, while the main reading room is, as it should be, one of the most superb rooms in the world. The quiet and mellow tones of the walls and cases support a ceiling in which the general effect is dark, but which filled with color and with gold is so wonderfully composed as to leave no impression of gaudiness. We have had in New York in the last fifteen years probably as many superb interiors executed as have been done in the rest of the world in the last century; the wonderful new hotels, the public buildings and the banks, the office buildings, have vied with each other to house themselves fitly in all the splendor and beauty that the best architects of the country working in marble, in rare woods, in colors and in gold could devise; and there have been some very splendid achievements as the result of all this effort. McKim, Mead & White will be remembered no less for the interior of the National City Bank, the Pennsylvania waiting room and the dining hall at the Harvard Club, than for the exteriors of these three buildings. Hardenbergh has in the Plaza, the Waldorf and the Martinique done rooms and public halls of strength of design far superior to that displayed on the exterior of the same buildings, excellent though they are; Cass Gilbert has in the rotunda of the Custom House built a room fully as excellent as the exterior of the same build-

ing, and the interior of the Columbia chapel bears stronger testimony of the excellence of Howells & Stokes than even its exquisite exterior. So Carrere & Hastings, in this great building which they have almost made a life work, have perhaps surpassed the notable exterior in the flawless perfection of the rooms which it contains.

THE Municipal Building, Hartford, Conn., (Davis & Brooks, architects; Palmer & Hornbostel, consulting architects), which is fully illustrated as to its plans and shows also one side elevation, is a very pretty working out of the municipal scheme. Entered from three sides of a long rather narrow lot, the problem was not so much to obtain sufficient circulation as to avoid confusion of circulation, and this was done by making practically the entire center of the building a court from the basement to the third story. The entrances of the different departments are placed nearly at the ends of this court with the largest of the offices on the first floor opposite the main entrance. The stairways are ample and although the elevators are far separated, there being two at each end of the building, it is probable that in a three story building the service rendered by each pair would be ample to provide against a crowd collecting in front of the elevators waiting for the next one to come down. Of course, it would be impossible to run from one end of the corridor to the other to catch the next elevator, yet, assuming that each pair of elevators serves its particular group of departments only, and that the number of persons using each of these departments is equal, which is, I think, a fair assumption, this objection does not seem serious. They were probably placed in the positions as given largely to secure a pretty and symmetrical plan, and also to form an agreeable termination to the covered court. Also they are convenient to the entrances at the two ends and their distribution probably aids in avoiding the confusion of circulation above spoken of. The building is so arranged that the majority of the rooms have much less depth from the lighted wall to the dark wall than is usual in public buildings; this is certainly an arrangement much to be commended, and one which, unfortunately, is not too much considered. The storerooms and vaults have been placed at each side of the entrance corridor and yet in such a way as not to interfere with the entrance to the rooms, an arrangement somewhat surprising, but perfectly agreeable. One naturally looks for the most important rooms to be put on the first floor with the axes of the entrances leading straight toward them, yet the rooms seem to be all the way through about of equal importance and the location of the various rooms was probably determined in the program. The toilets are ample and sufficiently separated from the main corridor. In regard to this arrangement of toilets it seems to me that the majority of our public buildings are somewhat deficient. In working up a competition drawing, or working drawing for that matter, one instinctively seeks to hide away the toilets and make window area as inconspicuous as possible, forgetting that after all there is probably no room in the building where light and air are more desirable than in the toilet rooms, and that the fixtures can be so arranged as to present no undesirable appearance from the street.

The elevation is of a somewhat conventional type, the end bays marked by orders placed on the second and third stories. I, for myself, never regarded the raising of the orders so far with much favor. The larger the order cer-



tainly the more dignified the building, and although in the three-story order the width of the entablature presents invariably a difficult problem, nevertheless, a public building cannot be considered quite in the same utilitarian light as a private one, and the utmost dignity of appearance should be obtained upon the exterior, with less regard to the last available inch of window area than would be the case in a private office building. Readers of ARCHITECTURE will remember the superb series of competitive drawings for the New York Post Office and for the Denver Post Office. Almost every competitor in these two schemes felt that an order practically the entire height of the building was essential to the type of building shown and this Municipal Building at Hartford is no less important than the others; and while we have no doubt many excellent buildings in which the order is lifted as far from the street, sometimes even further than in this case, the other seems preferable.

Within its limitations, so far as one can judge from the single elevation shown, the architecture seems to be of a dignified, simple and straightforward type, quite appropriate to its use.

### THE USE OF LIGHT.

ALBERT JACKSON MARSHALL.

THERE is probably no one thing that has more direct bearing upon our living than light, and its effects are perhaps less known by the public than any other principle phase of our existence. There is an old saying that familiarity breeds contempt. I have often wondered if light, by being so general and, therefore, to a measure, familiar, did not cause a feeling of indifference to prevail, and if it were just a little more evasive and difficult to obtain whether it would not be studied to a greater extent. Now as daylight is the more difficult to obtain in the congested portions of our cities, more thought is being expended upon its use, for which study we should be truly thankful. Most of us have been inclined to look upon light, especially daylight, as costing nothing and like everything else that we get for little we fail to appreciate to the extent that we should if we had parted with something of value. I think it is due to conditions arising from our lack of appreciation of daylight that is causing a lack of thought to be expended in the utilization of artificial light.

The things which apparently concerns the users of light the most are the lighting bills, and comparatively little thought has been expended on the cause—ways and means of employing light so that it would produce results which would be considered good from the standpoint of physiology, psychology and aesthetics, not forgetting efficiency and economy. If we are ailing, we have our case diagnosed by one who has made a study of such conditions and means are employed to eliminate the cause; so with light. If the problem is studied by some competent person and a scheme suggested, he who uses light will know just what it will cost to maintain effects that are desired before the installation is made, then if the cost be too great other arrangements may be considered. This is a far better method of handling the problem than attempting to change the scheme after the installation, which oftentimes distorts the pre-conceived effects and robs the installation of its individuality.

For the most part, and justly so, light, especially artificial light, during recent years, has been employed in the architectural field to accentuate and sustain some decorative schemes and the results which have been brought about in

some instances are very praiseworthy. The possibilities of using light as a part of decorating are almost without number; the field being broadened each year with the developments of new types of illuminants and accessories. It should be borne in mind, however, that it is one thing to obtain an effect extravagantly and another thing to obtain the same effect in an economic manner.

In approaching a lighting problem the work usually may be successfully handled along these lines: the development of a lighting installation *that will be in perfect harmony with its surroundings, which will permit the eye to visualize without undue effort and ill effect while producing the desired psychological effect upon the mind*, such effects being obtained with efficient illuminants which permit of economic maintenance. Up until a few years ago there was comparatively little authentic knowledge as to the production and utilization of artificial light, but thanks to extended investigations and experiments during the last decade or two, we have available quite a fund of data which, if applied, would make it possible to obtain desired results at reasonable cost.

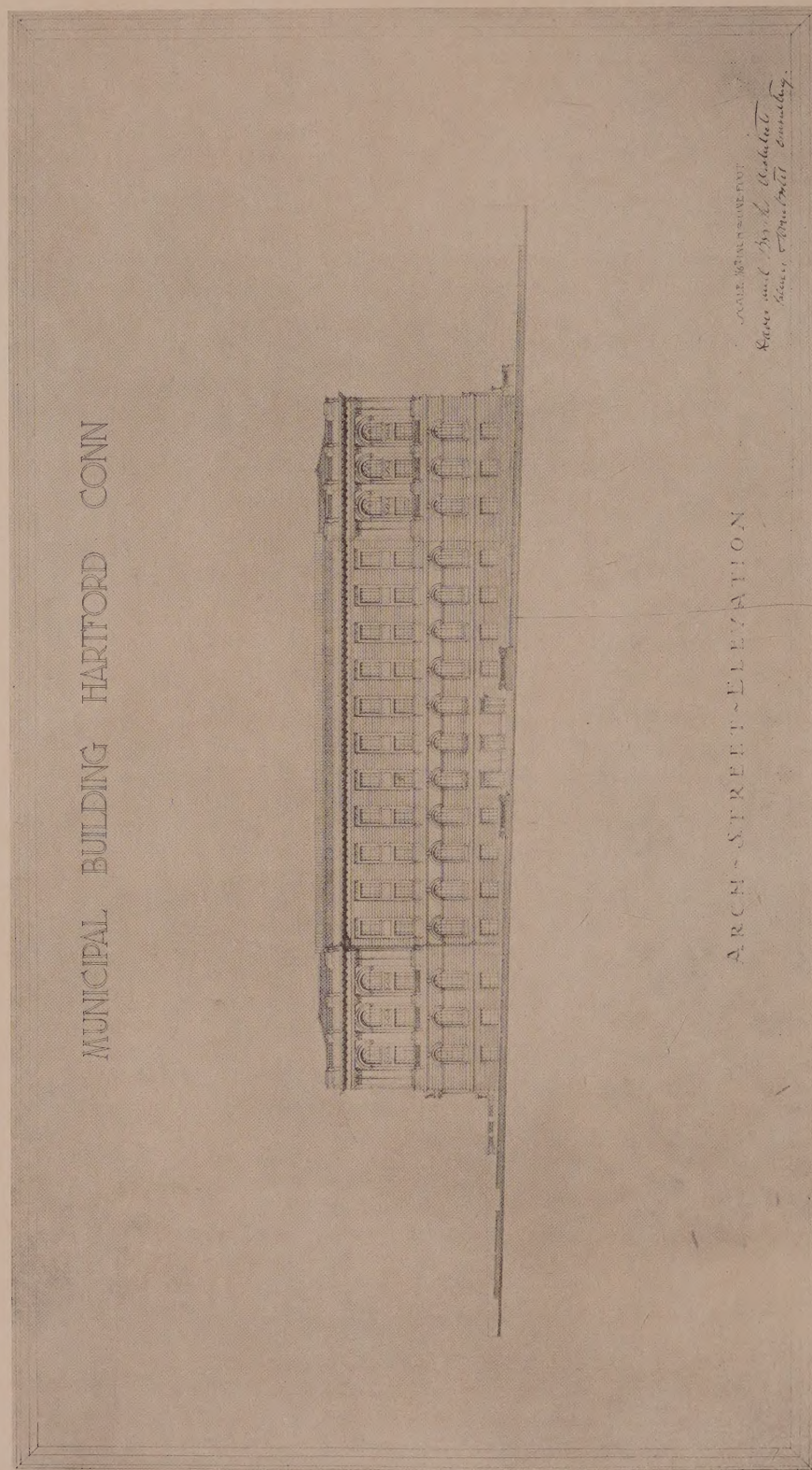
With some designers the idea has prevailed that the costs of installation and maintenance were the chief considerations in the design of a lighting installation, while others have sacrificed most everything for artistic effects. For the average installation a proper blending of these two extremes is desirable. There are many lighting installations where the aesthetic side is of greater, if not all (the effect of light on the eye and brain is always to be considered of paramount importance) importance and everything in such installations should be subordinated to such effects, but even here it is desirable to take advantage of efficient illuminants and accessories, permitting of low operating costs, because then the effects obtained are practical to maintain. How often do we find the cost of maintaining a perfectly good effect prohibited? This is a very important point. On the other hand there are installations where efficiency and economy are the main features; and just as efficiency and economy may be used to supplement artistic effects, aesthetics (I do not necessarily mean embellishment, but rather that which constitutes good taste) may be used to remove the vulgar utilitarianism which so often is reflected from those things that are so intensely practical.

The wonderful opportunities afforded for the use of light, both natural and artificial, in countless forms and places, justifies an interchange of ideas by those working on such problems in order that the art and science may be raised to the highest possible plane. About five years ago the Illuminating Engineering Society was established for the advancement of the theory and practice of the use of light and the dissemination of knowledge related thereto. The Illuminating Engineering Society numbers among its fifteen hundred odd members architects, designers, decorators, electrical and mechanical engineers, physicists, chemists, physiologists, contractors, mathematicians, psychologists, those interested in the production and use of electricity, gas, acetylene, oil, etc., in fact, every phase of the subject is represented.

The use of the word "engineering" in the name of the society may cause some people to feel that the society is chiefly interested in the physical and mathematical sides of the work, and this feeling, unfortunately, may have kept some people, who are interested in other phases of the work,

(Continued page 45)

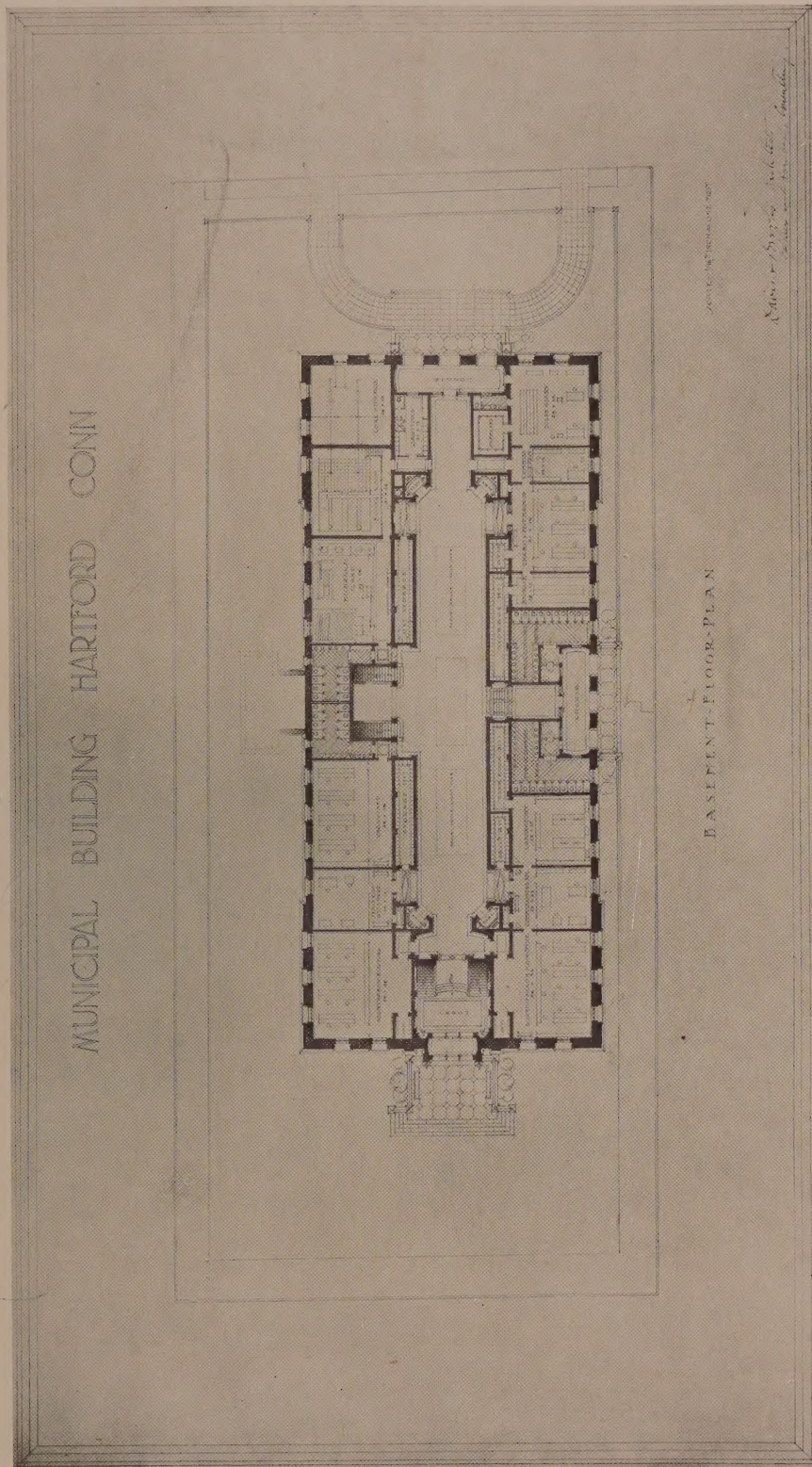




ACCEPTED COMPETITIVE DESIGN, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, HARTFORD, CONN.

Davis & Brooks, Architects. Palmer & Hornbostel, Consulting.

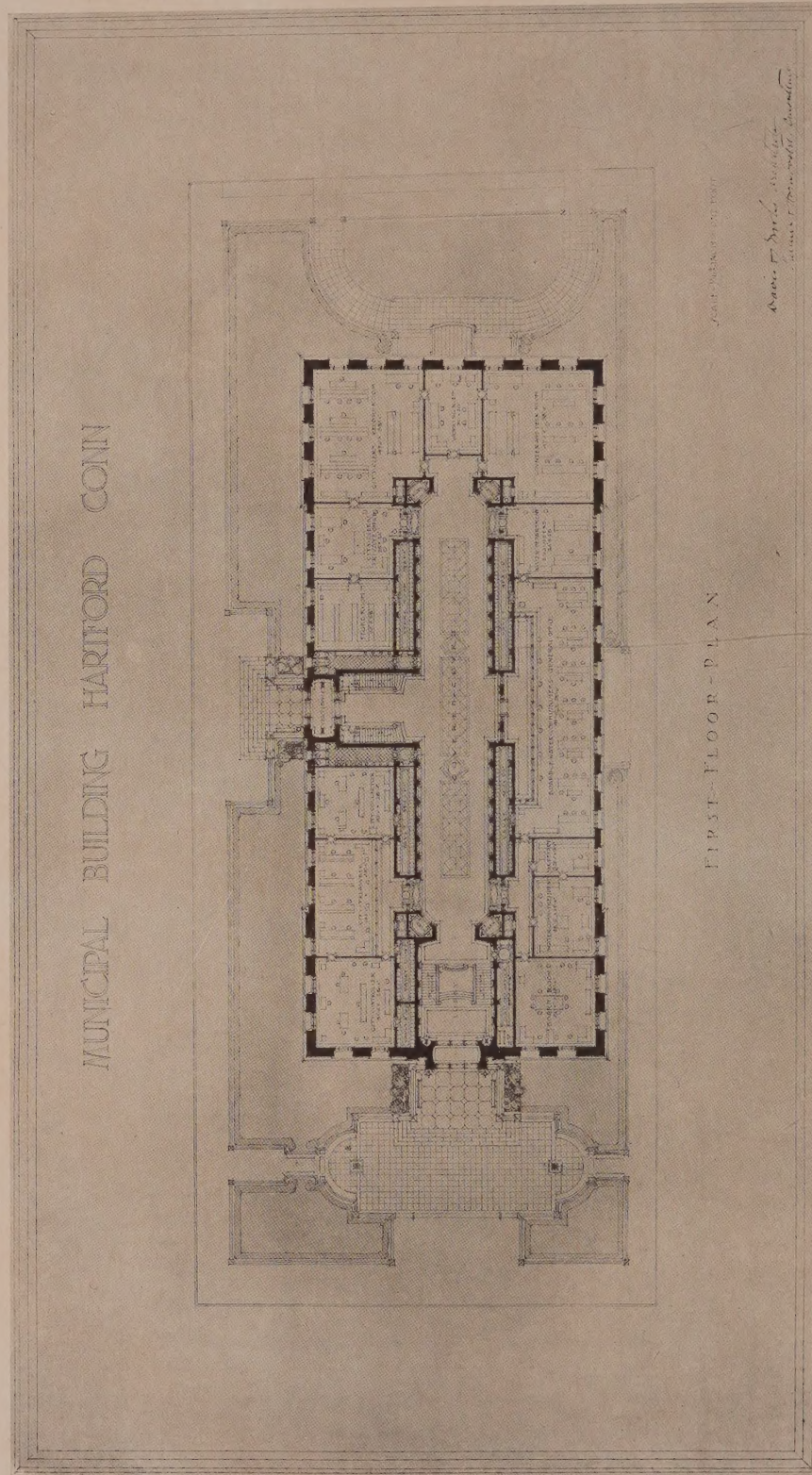




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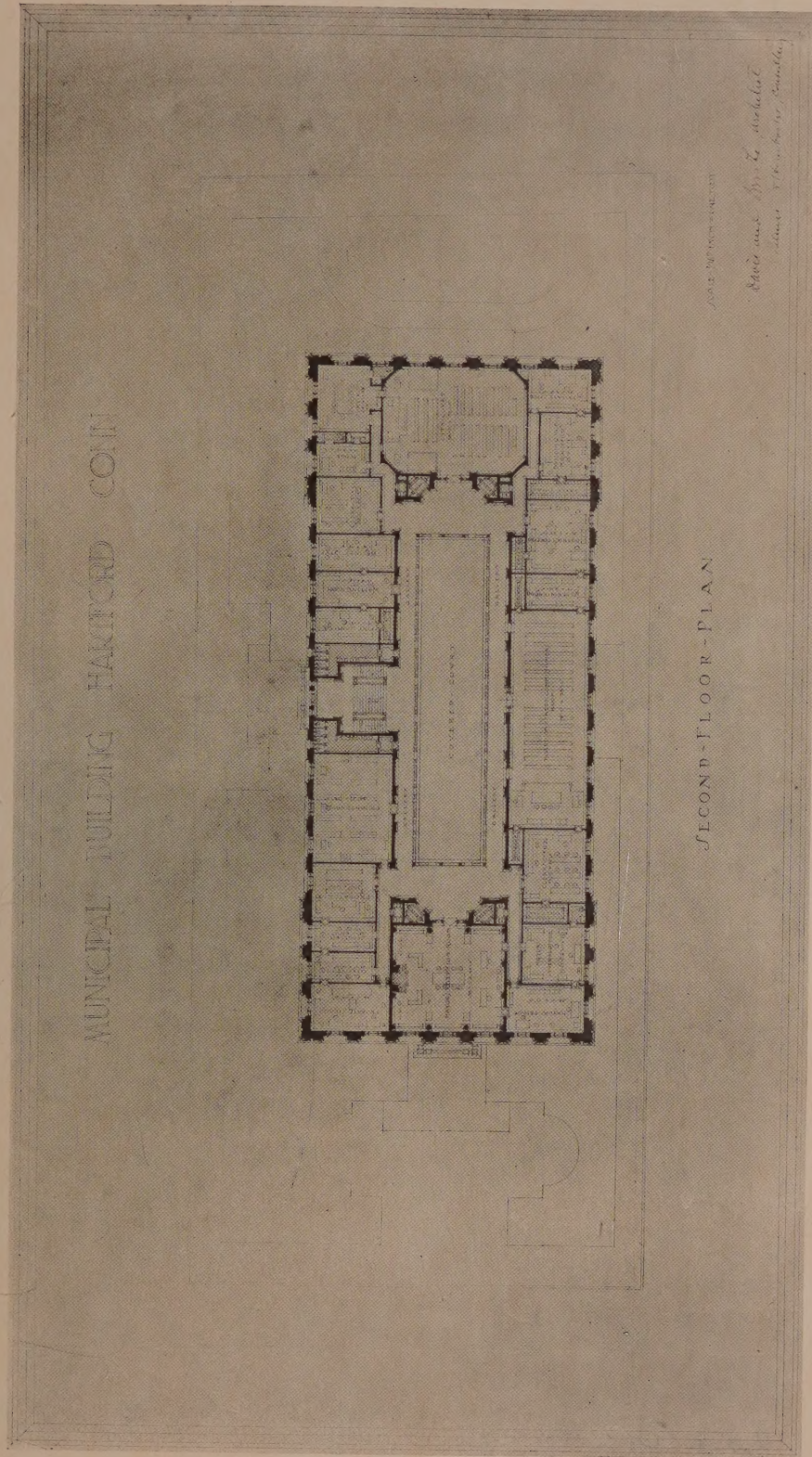




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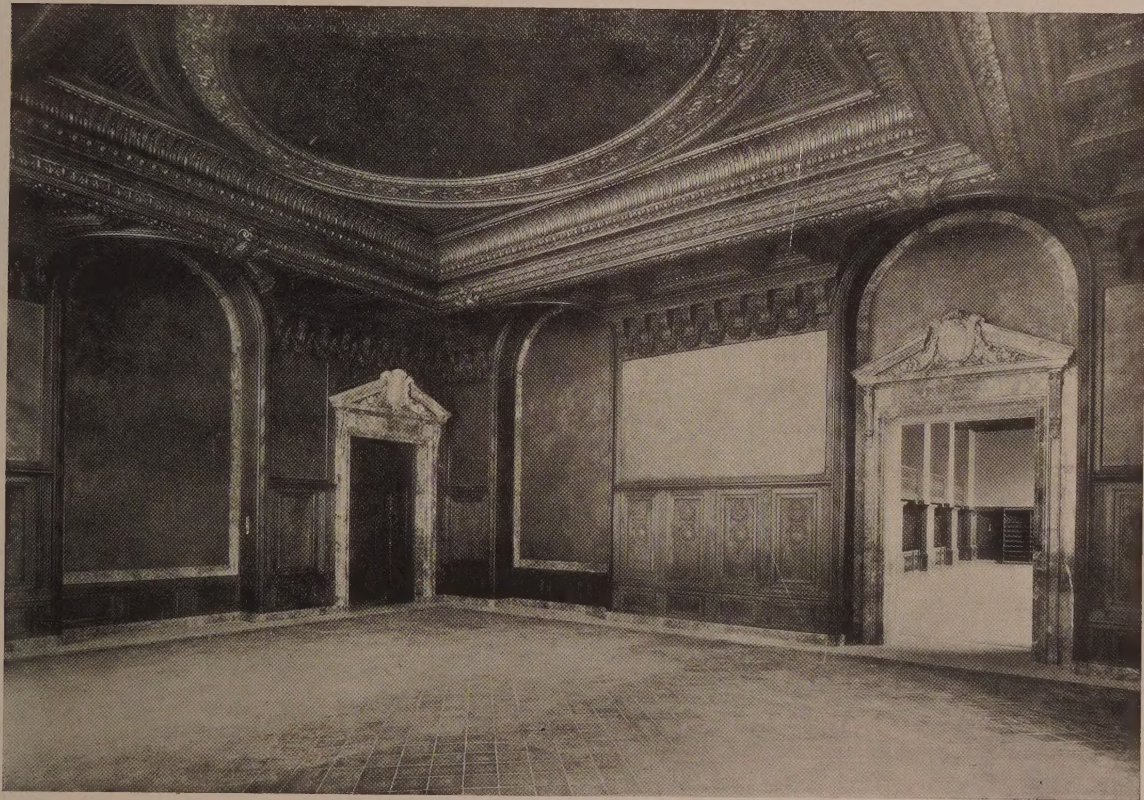
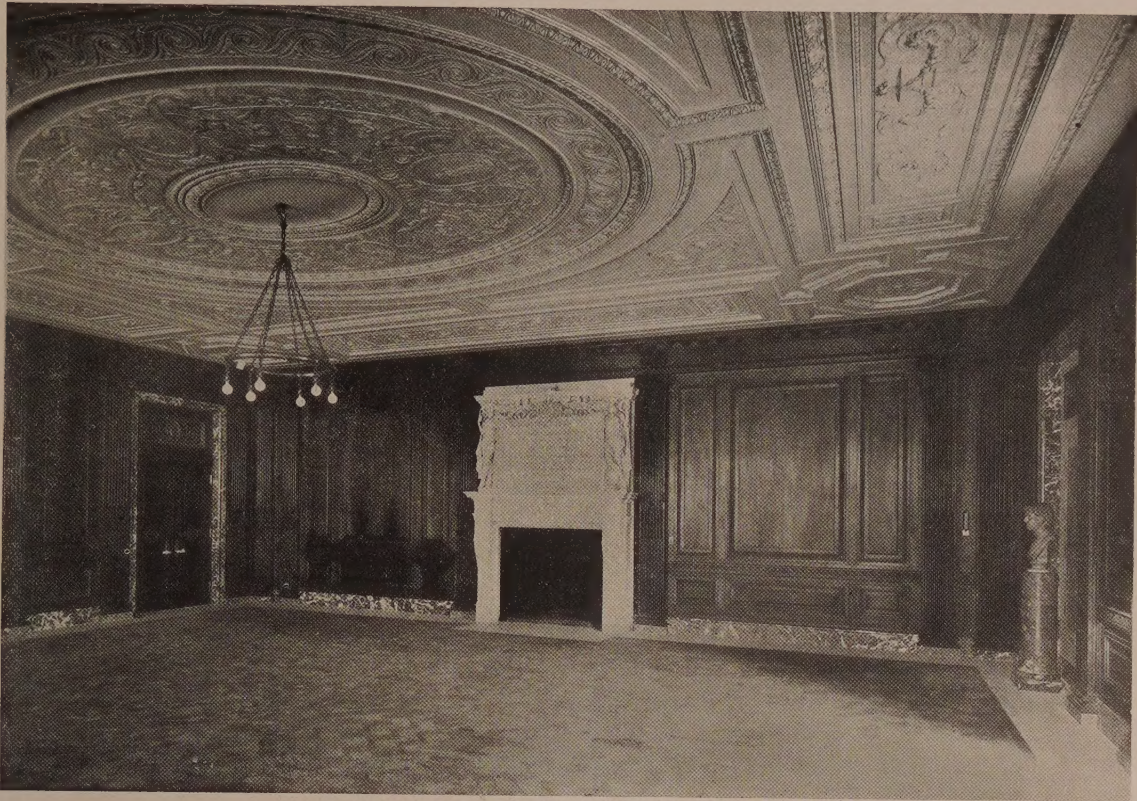




PROPOSED COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 23RD ST. AND SIXTH AVE., NEW YORK.

H. P. Knowles, Architect.

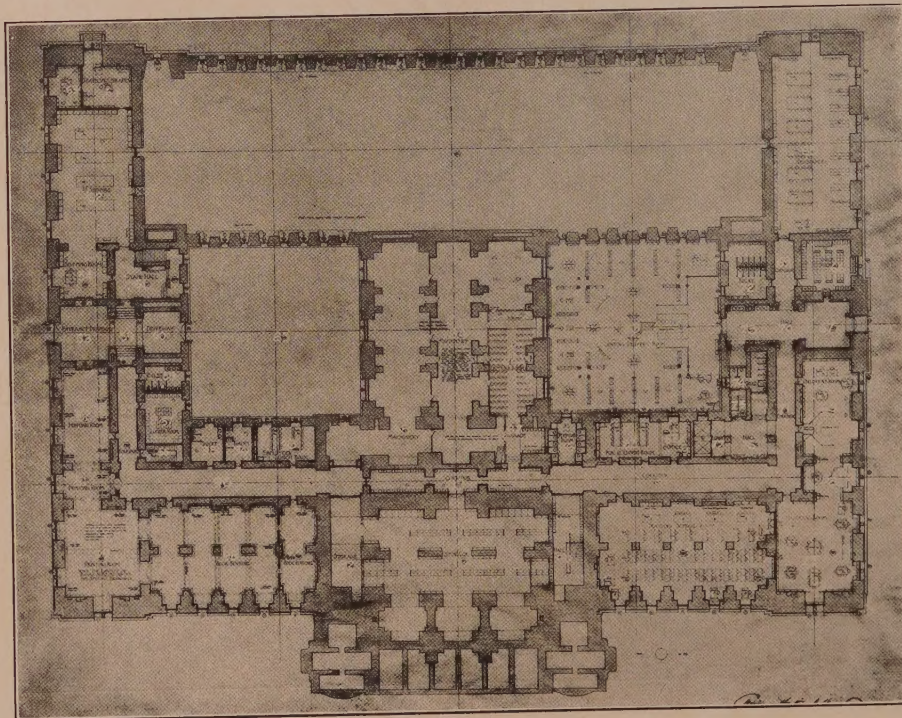
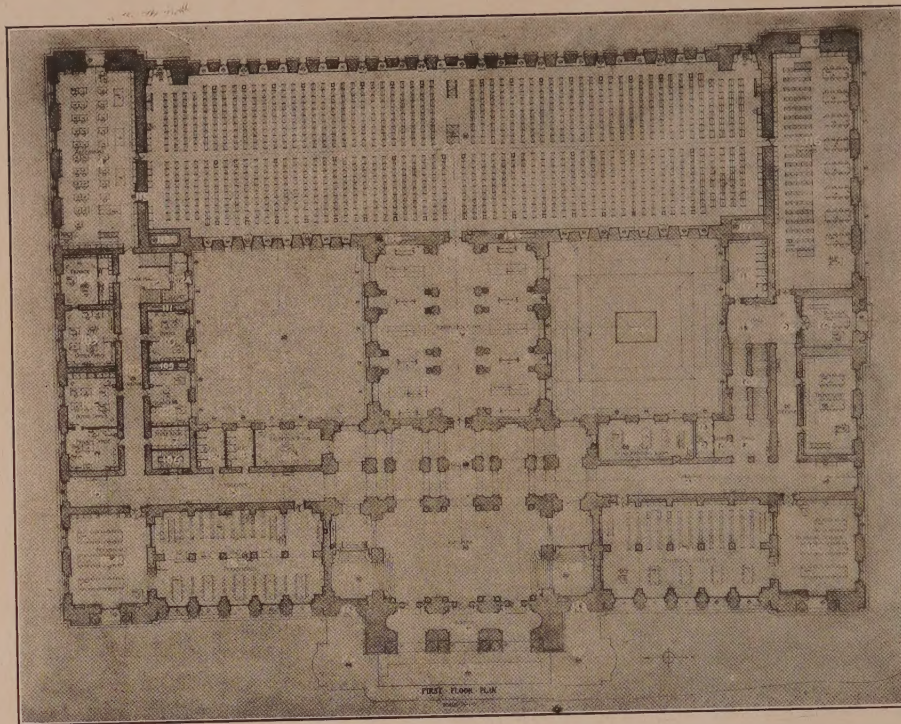




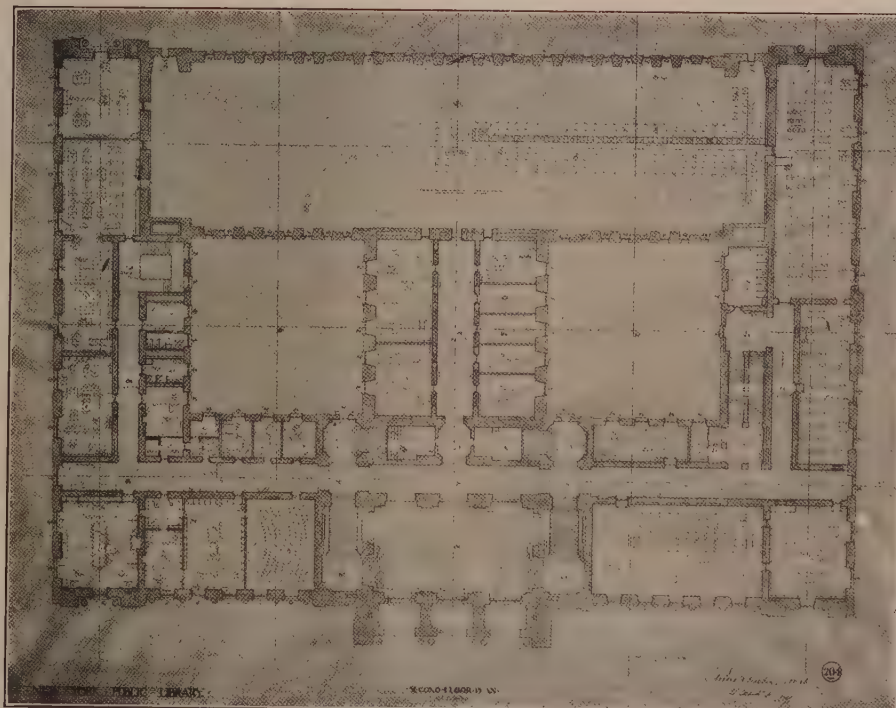
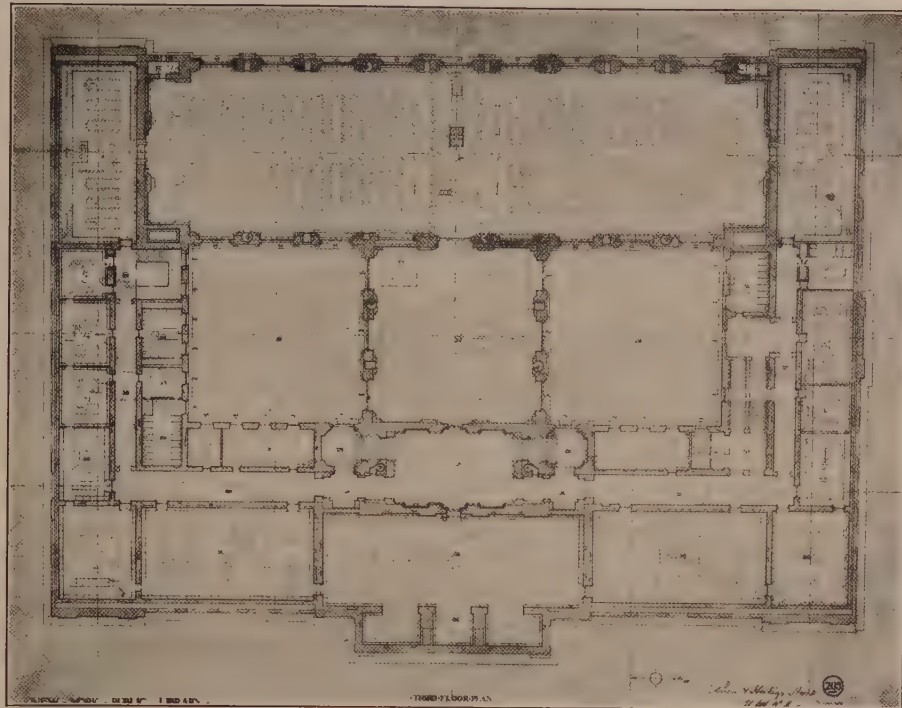
TRUSTEES' ROOM AND PERIODICAL READING ROOM, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Carrere & Hastings, Architects.

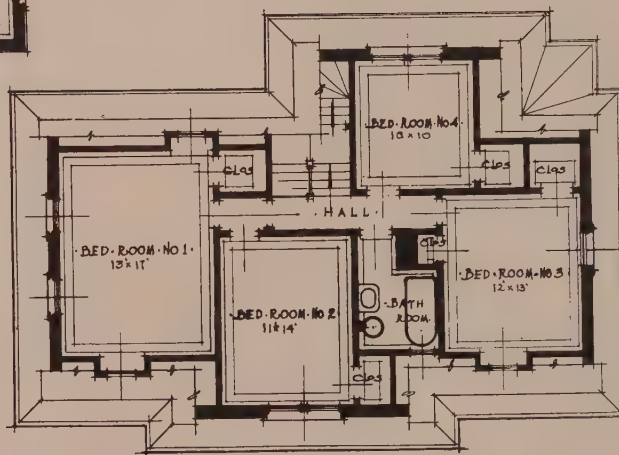
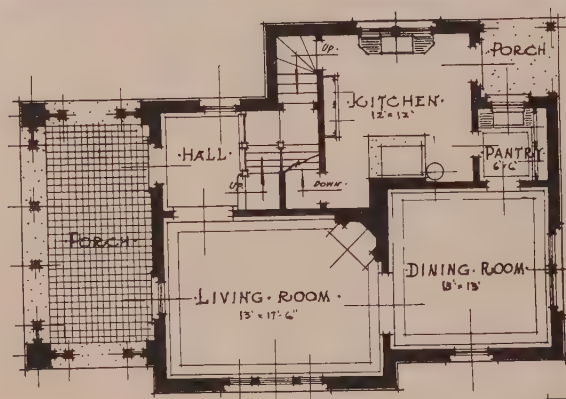












PROPOSED COUNTRY HOUSE AND PLANS.

Aymar Embury II, Architect.



(Continued from page 35)

from affiliating themselves with the society. The scope of the society is as broad as its subject and if one would permit himself to become interested in the work, the name will be the more easily understood and accepted. It is the personal opinion of the writer that it would have been desirable to have given the organization such a title for instance as the Society of Illumination Design, or other similar name, which would have appealed to all those interested in the subject and at the same time to have been self-explanatory. After all is said and done, however, the thing that counts is that which is accomplished, and the Illuminating Engineering Society has certainly done very excellent work. There is much yet to be accomplished and if all those interested in the use of light, both natural and artificial, will get together on a common ground and formulate methods of use the work will have been given much valuable impetus.

On February 9, in the Dungeon of Castle Cave, 271 Seventh Avenue, City, the New York Section, Illuminating Engineering Society, held its regular monthly meeting at 8.15 o'clock, which meeting was preceded at 6.30 by a beefsteak dinner, which was attended by eighty members and guests. The principal topic for discussion at the meeting was "Light and Architecture." Henry Hornbostel, of the architectural firm of Palmer & Hornbostel, gave a very interesting extemporaneous talk wherein he cited some recent examples of how light was being used not only to supplement decoration, but as a part of decoration itself. Mr. Hornbostel expressed himself as feeling that the architect with the almost unlimited combinations of lighting equipment at his command, to say nothing of the new light sources which are constantly being perfected, had at his disposal means of creating effects that heretofore had hardly been dreamed of. In the discussion which ensued Donn Barber, S. P. Voorhees and F. H. Holden were likewise agreed that we had much to learn yet about the use of light and that much could be obtained through a systematic study of requirements for the various classes of services. Bassett Jones, Jr., spoke of the need of considering light as a part of the interior treatment of a space in which it was used. V. R. Lansingh stated that efficiency and economy of a lighting installation did not necessarily mean the result of energy (current) in-put to the illumination (foot-candle intensity) output, but it more properly meant the obtaining of desirable effects in a manner which would permit of efficient illuminants being employed so that results obtained would not necessitate excessive high maintenance costs.

The meeting was, in every sense, a success, giving promise of closer working relations between those interested in the use of artificial light. The general secretary (Preston S. Millar, 29 West 39th Street, City), would be pleased to acquaint any of those interested in the subject with the workings of the Illuminating Engineering Society. All interested in the subject are eligible to membership.

#### THE AMATEUR CLERK OF WORKS.

IT is rather too bad, in these slack times, that the trained and competent clerk of works should find his profession invaded, and the work which ought to find him in a living taken away by people who profess to give their time and trouble simply for "love of the cause," says the *London Engineering Journal*. But it is so; and a set of instructions to architects which we happened to meet with the other day expressly mentioned as a thing which the selected archi-

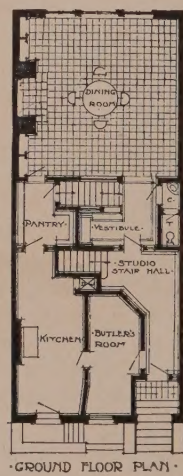
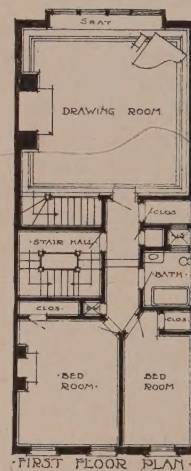
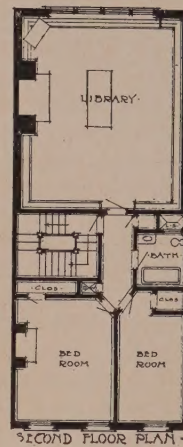
tect, whoever he was, would have to count on and be prepared for: "Members of the committee," it was stated, "will assist the architect in the superintendence of the works, and he is to submit the detailed drawings for their approval, and to alter them whenever directed. A paid clerk of works will not be appointed." This committee, perhaps, have never heard that "the dearest way of buying anything is to have it given you," but by the time the walls are up, and the settlements begin, and the timbers shrink, and the ceilings fall, and the bill of extras comes in, some of them may be ready to admit that there is more wisdom than they supposed in that adage of our ancestors.

The amateur clerk of works, we learn from people who have met him in the flesh, is rarely connected with the building trade. He may be a retired grocer, or an unsuccessful accountant; or, if he is *very* superior—a would-be examinee who failed in his examination, but who feels, even so, that he derived glory enough from his attempt at science and art honors to set him up for life. In any case, he is associated with several other spirits no cleverer than himself, and all possessed, as *he* is, with the idea that the builder is a rogue, and the architect a rascal, who shares with him the profit of his roguery. Somewhere down in the depths of infamy, perhaps, there may be such a builder and such an architect, and if this is the sort of builder and architect these amateur clerks of works happen to meet with, they will all understand each other from the first, and "things will go as merry as a marriage bell." But if either architect or builder happens to have a conscience, or a sense of right and wrong, he pretty soon grows sick of the society he has fallen into, and renounces the committee and all their works. Even if he does not, they are likely enough to try and make him, for they feel by instinct that "there is a daily beauty in his life that makes theirs ugly," and they will pick a quarrel with him if they can, and warn their friends against helping in any way a man who disregards St. Augustine's advice to the wicked, of "Pecca fortiter," and who is sunk in the slough of "works and legality."

In the meantime, however, and before the committee, with the aid of its amateurs, attempts to shed its architect (or, in other words, to give him a bad name and hang him), we may note how it deals with the rather complex set of questions it has so boldly ventured to face. It appoints, say, half a dozen amateur clerks of works, who go their rounds as other engagements let them: sometimes every day, sometimes every few days, and sometimes not even once a week. At first, like a gentlemen Mr. Pepys mentions, they go to the works pretty often "to spy enormities," but when "enormities" are not of such frequent occurrence as they hoped, their zeal grows cold. It is then that those who know anything about building, however little, will begin to make the most of that little by writing urgent letters to the architect informing him, perhaps, that near the N. W. angle of the building, about 4 feet from the ground, one of them detected a snapped header on the point of being inserted, and that somewhere a little further on, two who were watching together found that four courses of bricks measured not exactly a foot, as the specification requires, but a full eighth of an inch above or under that mystic measure. Also, they do not approve of the molded brick which the architect has ordered for the plinth, and hereby direct him to have it removed, and other bricks made to their approval before Wednesday week, so that the builder

(Continued page 47)





RESIDENCE AND PLANS, 139 EAST 19TH ST., NEW YORK.

F. J. Sterner. Architect.



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may not make the alteration an excuse for demanding an extension of time. Within three or four days, when the architect has written for fresh molded bricks to be burned, and the makers have put them in hand, there comes another letter from another of the amateurs—to say that, in his judgment, the plinth-bricks that have been used will do perfectly well, and that the committee rely on the architect to see that no extra arises because of the alteration that had been suggested in them. The next time the architect meets the amateurs, or some of them, perhaps he explains what he has been directed to do about the plinth bricks, how he did it, and then was ordered not to do it, and asks them to tell him candidly how such contradictory things can be ordered without the cost of them and the delay they cause coming on the heads of the people who interfere. Of course, they cannot tell him, but they can produce the "Instructions," and say that he should not have agreed to work to them if he foresaw that working to them was impossible. But all this is only the beginning of the troubles.

Now is the time when the local architect comes in—or, if not a local one, some other architect who competed and failed, and who thinks that everything is fair in competitions and in war. His chance now is a good one—for all the amateur clerks of works have a grudge of one sort or another against the architect who did not fail, and want to "pay him out" because he has not pleased them all. He goes round the building with the committee and points out diligently everything small or great that can possibly be complained of. If a tree has grown up against a window, and is going to be cut down, but has not yet been, the unsuccessful competitor points out that the place is dark. If the doors are screwed up for some temporary purpose, he tells the committee no one can pass from one part of the building to another. If the seats are not fixed yet, he complains that they will not be safe, and that a serious accident may happen at any moment. If anyone in crossing the roof has accidentally broken a tile, he shows how likely it is that scores of other tiles may be broken where nobody has detected them, and how certain it is that rain will pour in through the roof in stormy weather. To the local architect or the unsuccessful competitor, or sometimes the county architect deputed to find fault with another architect whose appointment someone else thinks it desirable to obtain, everything is wrong; and for everything that is wrong, or is falsely called so, the architect in charge of the work, and nobody else, gets the blame. The local man, or the unsuccessful competitor, or the favorite of the great man on the county council, on the contrary, does everything well, or would have done if the committee had only appointed him, and if that troublesome assessor—whom they were obliged to listen to because of the annoying insistence of outside architects—had not, through a mere indifferent regard to fair play, given him the first place. But the committee see that this does not answer their purpose. They may have another competition soon, and no matter what the assessor says or what the plans are, they are firmly resolved that their favorite shall gain it: and so is he. And perhaps the secretary or the local correspondent, or his clerk, or somebody about him, quietly plays into the committee's hands when the time comes, and lets everybody know (who is concerned) which is the right man's plan to select, and which are the plans that are simply to be disregarded. We have heard in former times the cry of "Measures, not men," but the

competition committee's motto is, "Men, not measures!" and they seldom stop at any tricks to make it so.

And in helping to make it so, the regiment of amateur clerks of works are, or often must be, an invaluable help to them. Half a dozen or only a quarter of a dozen people, fussy and mischief-making by nature, and put into a position where fussy and mischief-making qualities are the only ones likely to gain them a reputation; with the power, by falsehood, to injure a man's prospects, blackmail him in his profession, and, perhaps, to ruin him. One of them here and there thinks when he begins that "there is money in it." For the local architect and for the defeated competitor there may be; for the amateur clerk of works we should judge that there very seldom is. There is a sort of importance attached to the post. Its holder feels that he can raise up one and put down another, and whatever faults he may foolishly have found, all will be attributed, in his party or his sect, to zeal for the cause. He will end by being a great man in a small way. He need not fear: the praise, in any case, will go to him, and the blame will fall on the architect. And, seeing that sects and parties usually feel themselves superior to fairness, and rectitude, and common honesty, because it is not mere earthly things like these that they aim at—but things much higher—they will have in this life, as Felix Holt says, "a high step and a brass door-knocker;" and after death a tomb erected at the expense of their fellow-members, "whose interests they so diligently and faithfully served." Perhaps, after all, their "fellow-members" would have been better off without them and perhaps they—if they were well-meaning men—would have been better off without "their fellow-members."

#### AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE.

AT present there is no department of architecture in which creative talent is without motive to achieve distinction. American architecture in so far as it is at all independent is, indeed, of a single generation. Yet it occupies a leading position in contemporary art. Though essentially eclectic, it has followed wholesome traditions, and the nature of the local problems which it has had to solve has impelled it to develop an individuality of its own. In some respects, as in the planning of tall buildings, it is quite original. American architecture, says Professor Adshead of Liverpool University, will ever be regarded as epoch making in the progressive stages of the architecture of the world. Its chief defect is that it has been wanting in unity of composition. For that, however, owners rather than architects are responsible. The remedy is to be sought in a more generous spirit of co-operation among property holders, and such co-operation is already manifest in our newer trade centers, as for example in certain stretches of Fourth and Fifth Avenues. It is still more apparent in the outskirts of the town, where entire suburbs are built up by single corporations.—*New York Sun*.

MR. ELI BENEDICT, architect, who has conducted classes in architectural drawing and in plan reading and estimating at the night school of the 23rd Street Y. M. C. A., will continue this work during the spring. The Atelier instruction is largely individual and covers such subjects as architectural drawing, architectural design, architectural perspective, water color rendering, freehand drawing, life class, plan reading and estimating.





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